

TELEGRAM

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Origin

Info:

Following background information is for your guidance in current discussions concerning Guatemalan situation:

1. Military operations in Guatemala: Information available to Department fails to support sensational newspaper stories and statements Guatemalan Government that large scale "Battle of Guatemala" is on. What has happened is small ground forces commanded by Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas, Guatemalan exile leader formerly resident Tegucigalpa, began operations on June 18 (by occupying Guatemalan villages near Honduran frontier without resistance. To date their deepest confirmed penetration has been to Gualan on only rail line between capital and Atlantic and to Esquipulas, airport town near Salvadoran border. Rebels have thus infiltrated only small strip, about 5-15 miles deep and 30 miles long, inside frontier. Guatemalan Government shifted troops from capital to area on June 19 and claims to have driven rebels from Gualan.

Two unidentified F-47's and one DC-3 airplane have at various times swept over Guatemala City. One of former strafed military airfield. There is no evidence of bombing of capital or strafing of civilian population. House which Guatemalan Government describes as bombed out is house of Colonel Mendoza, rebel leader, and is reliably reported to have been burned down by police.

Child

Dated by:

ARA:MID:JCR:11:mem 6/22/54

Telegraphic transmission and

classification approved by:

Raymond G. Leddy

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Child Guatemalan Government says died in strafing reliably reported to have been hit by 7 mm. bullet from trigger happy Government forces and is recovering. Reports of bombing and/or strafing of provincial cities and gasoline depots at San José and Puerto Barrios as claimed by Guatemalan Government unverified.

Planes have apparently air dropped arms to various points in interior but there is no evidence of uprisings in favor rebels. There has been no significant defections from armed forces, though some evidence dissatisfaction among pilots small Guatemalan air force.

Despite limited scope of rebel activity, Guatemalan Government has domestically seized on it as grounds for beginning to arm Communist-controlled labor unions and other supporters, a step army has previously opposed. Such armed bands are stopping motorists on highways and searching cars.

2. International action: Guatemala quickly seized on Castillo Armas activities to build up case of "foreign intervention", a tactic it has long used to obscure Communist issue. On June 19 it appealed to Security Council to stop aggression and, without making explicit charges, cited Honduran and Nicaraguan Governments as supporting rebels. On June 20 Council unanimously adopted French resolution calling for immediate termination of any action likely to cause bloodshed. However, Soviet veto, backing up Guatemalan objections to having matter referred to OAS, prevented adoption Brazil-Colombian resolution supported by all other members to refer it to that body. Guatemala has now asked that Inter-American Peace Commission suspend action and has asked for Security Council to exert its authority with the Honduran and Nicaraguan Governments to stop all assistance

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assistance forces attacking Guatemala.

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3. Effects on previously proposed OAS meeting: Department has thus far received no reports from field concerning attitude Latin American Governments toward Castillo Armas activities in as far as it affects previously proposed OAS meeting on Guatemalan problem. Press reactions have been slow in coming in, possibly due usual week end lull in Latin American press circles. However, leftist newspapers reported to be slanting reports in favor of Guatemala and Communist-oriented groups have already started campaign to put blame on U.S.

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